

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal  
CONDUCTED BY  
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 682. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1881.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

PART III. MISS DOYLE.  
CHAPTER XI. OUT OF SIGHT.

SUCH news as this of Phœbe drove all else out of Phil's mind, or he might have given a few minutes of more rational and natural wonder to the altered circumstances in which he found his father. These were all the more remarkable, for its being now impossible to connect them with the disappearance of Phœbe. But, as it was, his whole idea of life had received a deadly blow. Of course the girl was flighty, feather-brained, romantic, and even silly—so much he knew, because Love is as quick to see faults as to ignore them; his famous bandage is placed over his unhappily keen eyes, not by nature, but by his own hands. But this thing had never entered into his heart, even in its most jealous moments, to conceive. He had been more miserable about her than he knew—but for himself, not for her. She had always been, with all her faults, the one bright flower in a world of weeds; the one saving touch in that forlorn and shiftless thing which the Nelsons called home. She had been the one thread of softness in the straight hard road he had marked out for his own feet to travel. And now—what had become of her? Why could she not have loved him a little, if only that she might have been saved?

"I will give up loving her!" his heart groaned. "I'll only find her, and save her, if it makes her hate me—if she's to be saved in this world. I'll force myself to hate her—and I'll save her, just because I hate her with all my heart. Poor little girl!"

But where was she to be found?

Vermin like Stanislas Adrianski are apt to vanish when wanted, and only to appear again in unexpected places and at wrong times. To find them, one must turn over the middens of every big town between San Francisco and Astrakhan; and then they may be in Melbourne or Cape Town all the while. They change their trades and their names, and even their features, sometimes; and nobody ever knows anything about them, because nobody ever wants to know. Phœbe might, at this moment, be deserted and starving in some Parisian garret, desperate for daily bread, and exposed to all the hideous temptations that those who have ever hungered alone can know. Or, if the end was not yet come, it must needs come in no long time. But how can words tell what Philip Nelson foresaw? Save her, indeed! It was worth murdering one's own brother to save any girl on earth from such a doom.

However, he had made up his will to love her no more. Apart from his duty towards a sister in deadly danger, he would, as he called it, play the man, and plod on in his straight hard road with his eyes fixed and his heart closed. Whatever he would have done, had he never heard these tidings, he must do now, and the smallest things, and therefore the hardest, all the more, if only out of defiance, and to prove to himself that he was master of himself and that his will was his slave—not knowing that the man who believes in the strength of his own will incurs the peril of him who trusts to the strength of a straw. So, instead of spending the night, like one of Phœbe's heroes, in a desperate walk to nowhere, or relieving himself by a plunge into what their biographers call, in their tongue, some haunt of dissipation, he went

straight to the lodging which he was, till he should leave London, sharing with Ronaine. He would not even allow himself the luxury of being alone. To do what one liked was, of necessity, weakness in the eyes of Phil. He must now carefully watch for opportunities of thwarting and crushing himself, at every turn.

"Ah," cried the now familiar brogue, as he entered. "Here he comes, the best patient to cure, and the worst to nurse, that ever I knew. Nelson, let me introduce ye to my friend Esdaile, who's the greatest painter in London. Esdaile, this is my friend Nelson, who's the biggest engineer I know, bar none. But he's bad to nurse—he's got engineering notions about the human machine, and thinks it goes by steam. Ye should have come with us to The Old Grey Mare, Phil, my boy, as I wanted ye, instead of going off about work the first thing. It isn't the work a man lives by—it's the meat and the drink; and if a man don't eat and drink, neither shall he work—and that's true."

"Nelson?" asked Esdaile, accepting the introduction with a nod, "no relation to our old friend?"

"What? Meaning the admiral? I'd think not, indeed! Why, he'd have known all about Zenobia, my little girl; and he's never heard of her, except from me. But I'll introduce him—and may be—who knows? We're both of us fathers, Esdaile; we'll have to give her away. Faith, there'll have to be six of us though, counting poor—I mean that infernal woman-beating blackguard, Jack Doyle. I'd like to see the thundering scoundrel again, just to knock him down with one fist and shake hands with the other. But ye don't look the thing to-night, Phil, at all. Ye've begun bothering too soon. I hope ye've had no bad news?"

"I'm quite well," said Phil roughly, in a tone that had no effect on the doctor, who was by this time familiar with what he called the Saxon in his friend, but which must have made Esdaile set him down as an ill-conditioned bear. "For that matter, I must be well. I'm going out of town, to report on draining some marsh lands——"

"And you just well from the marsh-fever? Are ye mad? As your medical attendant, I forbid ye to go. Ye'll just stay here."

"No, Ronaine. I must go."

"There's something wrong with ye to-night, Phil—I saw it with half an eye, as soon as ye came home. I thought 'twas

the work. But as it's not that—if it's anything stuck in the heart, have it out like a man, and never mind Esdaile; he'll mix the medicine meanwhile. 'Tis Miss Phœbe? Ah, I'd give half the practice I'll get some day, and all I've got now, to be able to feel like a fool about any girl ye like to name. And so'd Esdaile; faith, it's we're the fools, that have done with fooling. 'Tis Miss Phœbe, then, after all?"

"Good-night," said Phil, unprepared for the strength of this straw, and, in spite of his manhood, which was true enough, feeling painfully like a boy. "I shall see you again—before I go."

"That's kind of ye! But look here, Phil. Never mind Esdaile—he won't count, between friends. You won't quarrel, least of all over a girl. I've been through it all myself—twenty times, till I got so used to it that faith, if a girl hadn't jilted me, I'd have had to jilt her, for after things have got to a certain sort of climax, ye see there's nothing else to be done. Jilted! 'Tis having had all the fun of the fair, and nothing to pay. I wouldn't give a bottle of vodki for a girl that's got so little love in her that she hasn't got more than enough for one boy. I wouldn't——"

"Good-night, Ronaine," said Phil, more gently, and holding out his hand. "You're right—whoever I quarrel with, it'll never be with you. You saved my life; and I've got to make it fit for saving."

"Why, then you're a good lad, after all, and if ye weren't a Saxon, ye might be an Irishman, by the soul of ye! I'll tell ye what I'll do. I'll swear a mighty oath, and Esdaile here shall bear witness—I'll swear on the bones of all my fathers, born and unborn, from their crania down to their brogues, and on my own right hand that's holding yours, and on anything else ye like to name, that ye shall marry my Zenobia; and she's worth twenty Phœbes by near a thousand pounds, that'll may be ten before I die. Ye—shall marry my Zenobia—and here's her health, and her husband's that is to be. And she'll make ye as good a wife, though I say it myself, as if she was a bit cut out of your own soul."

"Who is your amiable friend," asked Esdaile as soon as Phil left the room, "that you're so anxious to give him your sixth share in a daughter you don't know, and in a fortune that's got to be made? Of course you can give your Zenobia, you know. But can you give him Marion Basset, and Eve Esdaile, and Psyche Urquhart, and Dulcibella Nelson, and Jane Doyle?"

"Oh, they'll do for the bridesmaids. And one will be enough for him. I'll give him Zenobia, and the others may stay away—if they can. And as to the fortune, it's as safe as the Bank of England; for I look on that as a debt of honour—and honour's a sacred thing."

"And, talking of Dulcibella Nelson, who's your future son-in-law? You call him Phil Nelson—and, oddly enough, I happen to remember that our friend the admiral had a boy who answered to the name of Phil, and a very dirty, ragged little boy he was too, always counting his fingers and gnawing a slate-pencil. I expect I kept him in boots for a considerable while."

"Oh, there's lots of Nelsons. Why this Phil's a big gun in Russian railroads, and had a fever it was a real credit to know. He's a gentleman, every inch of him, and no more like the admiral than I'm like King Lear or Desdemona. And he's never heard of Zenobia—and 'tis impossible he'd never have heard of the little thing if he'd been the admiral's boy."

"Well, anyhow, Philip Nelson doesn't mean a straw more than it matters. He's welcome to my share in Miss Eve——"

"Miss Zenobia Esdaile, if ye please. I've nothing to do with Miss Eve."

"In Miss Burden, then. Seeing that I bought out—commuted for her boot-bill in the lump—perhaps I've lost the right to interfere. Only I do grudge your son-in-law one thing."

"And what's that? Why, I don't grudge the boy all my savings of the last twenty years. Didn't I bring him out of the jaws of death with my own hands? And would ye have me turn an ungrateful blackguard on him now?"

"I mean—her eyes, if they're anything like that child's."

"There, then—I'm the only real father out of the lot of ye," said Ronaine. "And I've earned the right to choose her husband—and I will, too. Phil Nelson's the man—as fine a case of malarious typhoid as I'll ever see."

Philip Nelson did not fall asleep soon, but, when he did, he slept soundly, and with no dreams that he could recall. Yet, when he woke, it was with a feeling of feverish stupor, as if he had not slept the whole night through. It cost him some slight effort to remember, all at once, the whole history of yesterday, and a far stronger effort to return to the resolute frame of mind with which it had closed. All things,

at first were so hopelessly bleak and bare. And when, at last, he gathered himself together stoutly enough to face the day, he was only certain of two things—that he must live for his work in life, and that he must save Phoebe from the worst, not for his own sake, but for hers, and for hers alone.

What can the weak know of the weakness of the strong? No weak man can ever feel wholly weak—for he can blind his eyes, and fly; nay, it is he who is made to seek and to find the strength that is no man's own. But the light of life had gone out for Phil, and he knew no other. Is this a history of heathens? So it seems—and so must all histories seem which are bound, as all such histories are, to leave out of all account all the deeper mysteries both of the body and of the soul. Phil Nelson did, nevertheless, believe in a great many things. He believed, among others, in the conquest of nature by man, and of man by himself: and he believed in himself, and in work and duty as being one and the same thing. And he believed in all these things still. But it had become a petrified creed, out of which the fire had burned and the heart had gone.

He made a point of being out before Ronaine was up or down, as he was shy of meeting a medical eye that would not fail to observe any signs of injustice towards breakfast, and to set them down to nearly the right cause. It was too early for him to see his own employer, so he strolled, as slowly as he could, towards what his brother Dick used to call "my place in the City"—that is to say, the office in which Mr. Richard Nelson occupied a stool for so long as it might please an exceptionally long-suffering, good-natured, or eccentric principal to put up with his vagaries. Dick was as true a Nelson as Phil was a false one; and yet there had always been the sort of sympathy between Dick and Phil that is sometimes observed between a monkey and a bear. And, more by luck than good management, he met Dick himself just setting out on some errand that probably required special delay.

"Ah—I heard from the governor you'd turned up last night," said the younger brother, who had lately been at some pains to acquire the proper nonchalance of high breeding. "I'm in no hurry—never am. Come and have a drink—by Jove! the more one drinks in the small hours, the drier one is in the long."

"That's not business, Dick. But I'll go your way. Did you write to me more than once while I was away?"



"No. You see writing letters——"

"Is a bore; I know. But I thought I must have lost a letter when I came back, and found you all in a new house, and——what does it all mean?"

"Ah, indeed! Between you and me and the post, it's my belief the governor got the right tip about Pocahontas, and was mean enough to keep it from his own son. Jack thinks he's been robbing Mark and Simple's cash-box, and Duke that he's found out a family secret, and is getting paid to hold his tongue. My belief is that the governor's a precious sharp old blade and a regular deep old file. But it's no use your looking after any of the sawdust, Phil. I wish there were; I'd cry halves. Yes, Phil; there's no more doubt that the governor's turned up some sort of trumps than that I haven't; such cards as I held last night you never saw. If I can't spot another Pocahontas, I shall have to make free with the cash-box too. I've half a mind to go on the Stock Exchange."

"And Phoebe is——gone."

"Ah, poor girl. But she always was rum. You take the advice of a fellow who knows women pretty well, and never trust one farther than you can see her with both eyes. I never do. When I say she's rum, I don't mean for taking a leap in the dark—that's their way; but it's for taking up with such a caterwauling, tallow-faced skunk as that fellow over the garden wall. But there's one comfort—you punched his head pretty well for him."

"So you believe Stanislas Adrianski to be the——"

"Rather—not being green. The governor knows it too, but he won't speak of it; it puts him in a rage. He came home one evening and found her flown; and by the same token, off goes Don Tallow-face too. I needn't say he forgot to pay his weekly bills—poor Mother Dunn, where he lodged, has never smiled again, and spent her last sixpence on a grindstone for her nails. If I were Phoebe, I wouldn't like to come across Mother Dunn. I don't think Phoebe took anything. But there wasn't anything worth taking in those days. Ah, Phil, there's only two sexes—men and fools. There was my new meerschaum—and she went off with nothing but her bonnet and shawl."

"And you dare to tell me," said Phil, "that you all let her—who had been our sister—go off without putting out a finger across her road? Poor girl—there is not a soul to care for her; not one!"

"Ah, Phil, you don't get knowledge of

the world from books, my boy. I'm a man of the world. You may stop a woman from doing the right thing with a wink—I've done it myself, fifty times—but you may as well try to stop the Flying Dutchman with your own skull as to keep a woman from going to the Devil if she's got the ghost of a mind to go. They all do it, you know. She's only one more. Well, old fellow, since you won't let me stand you a drink, p'raps you can lend me five pounds? By Jove! if you'd been with me last night, you'd know why. The luck was something——"

"You want me to help you from going to the Devil—you, a man, who would not lift a finger to save a girl?"

"Ah—but then I'm not a girl," said Dick. "If I had been, I wouldn't have asked you for five pounds. I'd have asked you for ten. Bless your heart, Phil, I know them, through and through. The best of them isn't worth lifting a finger for. But when the luck's like last night's——"

And that was all the information for which Philip Nelson threw away five pounds. But it was more than enough—it was clear that Phoebe's flight with this foreign scamp had been at least notorious enough to become the gossip of the neighbours. To go there, and gather up the current tales, would only be to learn how the foulest truth can be made yet more foul by lies. There was nothing left for the hour but to follow the road marked out for him, and to trust that the eager eyes of an aching heart might discover some by-path which should lead into the heart of the maze.

But I cannot tell—perhaps I cannot dream—what the struggle means between a heart that has ceased to live with life, and a brain that clenches itself, and will not die—nay, will not even groan, lest it should be ashamed.

"God bless you, my boy—and don't forget Zenobia," was Ronaine's parting blessing; and then, as ungratefully glad to be free of his friend as he could feel glad of anything, he set off for the station whence he was to reach the scene of his new work after a few hours' journey. Those few hours of escape enabled him to attempt some sort of a plan, but every effort ended in failure. He knew that he might spend every spare moment in searching London, and every penny he earned in making enquiries elsewhere, with as much hope of discovering Phoebe or her lover as if he were to sit down with folded hands. Perhaps—and thought could bring



him no nearer than this—he might, when an old man, hear by chance some account of how she had come to die in a workhouse, or in the streets, or in a gaol; that was always the last picture he could form. He had heard, or read, some story of how some prosperous, self-made man was accosted in the street by some wretched beggar-woman, and, chancing to look at her face, recognised the remains of features he had loved in youth, and had never forgotten—and the memory came upon him with a ghastly horror. It was not even a relief when he reached the little way-side station whither he was bound. He could not put the picture out of his eyes, and it was always Phoebe's eyes that he saw.

It was not a station where chance passengers were common, but there was an inn close by where he easily found a fly for himself and his portmanteau. His experiences of the drive were no better than those of the railway. In this out-of-the-way part of England, which was altogether new to him, he felt himself being carried farther and farther from even such poor possibilities of helping Phoebe as the most incredible chains of chance might afford. The dull flat country through which he drove was as much an image of his future life as the flare and fever of great cities was henceforth of hers. It began to be like a nightmare—the thought that she might be within the bounds of the same small island, and yet farther off and more lost than when he had been dying in a distant land. And all the while Nature, so far from sympathising with his mood, and putting on for him her harshest winds and most leaden skies, was alive with a bright sharp winter laugh, opening out a clear blue sky, and stinging no more than a healthy skin likes to be stung. Things would no doubt have been more fitting, had Phil been one of Phoebe's heroes. A woman—and what is Nature else?—cannot be expected to waste her sympathetic scowls upon fellows who have so little amour propre as not even to take a pride in their own misery; who do not even whisper: "This all comes of her not having chosen me."

#### WHERE THE MERMAIDS ARE GONE.

"WHY don't we see no mermaids now? I knows why!"

The oracle was Fern Jipson, able seaman on board the good ship *Osiris*, bound from the port of London to Calcutta; his most

attentive auditor was a small midshipmite belonging to the same gallant craft, myself; and the just-quoted profession of familiarity with a certain phase of the supernatural was delivered on the forepart of the spar-deck one hot afternoon, as we lay becalmed on the verge of the tropics.

Fern was a character. Accustomed to a seafaring life from his very infancy, at the age of five-and-thirty he had been wrecked on one of the South Sea Islands, where he and six of his companions who had escaped drowning were taken prisoners by the natives. Though he lost one eye by an arrow-wound, out of the seven his life alone had been spared—for what reason was not quite clear, as Fern was in the habit of variously attributing his good fortune to the accidental circumstance of his super-excellence or special dexterity in whatever might be the topic of conversation or dispute at the moment, from theology to thimble-rigging. "Don't tell me nothing about that!" he would say finally and emphatically; "if I hadn't knowed somethin' about that, I should ha' been eat more'n twenty years ago!" Be that as it may, he had remained on the island fifteen years, marrying a native woman and living in all respects as the savages did; so that, when an English ship came there after that lapse of time, he discovered that he had almost forgotten his own language, and caught himself marvelling at the white skins and strange attire of the visitors as his dusky adopted brethren did. But not for long. The accents of his native tongue wrought their spell on him, and he was seized with an irresistible desire to see the old country again and the wife whom he suddenly remembered he had left there. He got away, not without some difficulty; and after knocking about the world for several years more, found himself growing old and almost incapacitated for sailor work. Reduced to distress and unable to get a job, by great good luck he strolled into a shipping-office, as a forlorn hope, when the crew of the *Osiris* were signing articles; and our captain, with whom Fern Jipson had sailed when he was fourth officer many years before, recognising him, had taken him on and kept him in the ship more out of charity, and as a pensioner of his own for the sake of auld lang syne, than for any real service the old fellow could render.

It was, as I have said, a hot afternoon. The watch below were assembled on the fore-castle head, and presented a fringe of canvas-cased legs as they hung over the rail,

lazily watching the efforts of the sail-maker to harpoon the porpoises which were tumbling their somersaults under our bows; while the sailors of the watch on deck were all aloft stowing the topsails and top-gallantsails, all but Fern, who was squatting on the deck, scraping the oaken bitts surrounding the foremast, preparatory to varnishing them. And Fern was blubbering like a child.

Though I was midshipman of that watch my duties were so far from onerous, that the choice lay before me of seeing the sail-maker miss his porpoises, or of talking to Jipson as the better means of whiling away the time till four o'clock. The old man's tales of the marvellous had a weird fascination for me, so I chose the latter course, perching myself on the hammock-bin over against him, and wondering what he was crying for. Strange are the inconsistencies of human nature! I knew that he was waiting for me to question him, and I knew equally well that, if I had done so, he would have returned a surly answer or none at all. So, after a few minutes' silence, I cautiously opened fire with a query which was always pertinent.

"Have a bit of 'baccy, Fern?" I was making desperate efforts myself to acquire the fine arts of smoking and chewing, and invariably carried a plug of "hard" in my pocket to show that I was a real sailor.

Without a word he put down his scraper and stretched out a gnarled and venous hand in which the tattooed cinnabar and charcoal showed dimly through the brown sun-glazed skin; took the cake of tobacco, cut off a quid which might have weighed about a quarter of an ounce; adjusted it in his cheek with great deliberation before handing back the remainder; heaved a deep sigh, and resumed the scraper.

But, seeing that I was not to be lightly beguiled into committing myself, he paused again presently, and began to pour out his grievance.

"All the other chaps aloft, and me sot here to scrape bright-work like a boy! They thinks I'm got too old to go aloft. It's 'bout time I were slung over the side. I aint no use on board of a ship now. I aint a sailor now. I'm a deck hand now. That's what I am!"

It may be observed in passing that Fern's diction throughout was garnished with a variety of forcible expressions, usually of a hyperbolic nature, in the proportion of about two words here reported to one of vernacular suppressed.

"Anyhow, you've managed to smarten up that fife-rail." This from me, as a balm.

"Well, I ought to know summat about varnishin'. If I hadn't knowed summat about it, I should ha' been eat afore now."

Not wishing to traverse that well-worn groove, I cut in rather hastily:

"Did you ever see a mermaid, Fern, when you were on the island?"

"Mermaid? Hunderds of 'em. They used to come up in shoals there inside o' the reef on fine nights, a-combin' of their 'air an' a-singin' an' dancin' round like; mermaids an' mermen an' little mer-boys an' girls too. Wery perlite an' affable they was, too, if you spoke 'em, and willin' enough to come ashore, only the women was jealous of 'em an' druv 'em away with bows an' arrers. But I've seen 'em other places, too. The Comoro Isles used to be a great place for mermaids."

"Where's the Comoro Isles, Fern?" Neither my geographical nor grammatical attainments were conspicuous at that period.

"You'll see 'em by-an'-by. We shall leave 'em on the starboard side going through the Mozambique Channel. But you won't see no mermaids there nor nowhere else, now." And here I asked the question indicated by Fern's reply, which is recorded in the title of this paper.

"There's other places where they used to be seen," he went on, without immediately verifying his claim to a knowledge of the cause of their disappearance; "places where folks don't think of. It's a great mistake to say there's no mermaids in cold latitudes. I mind sailing from Montreal once for Glasgow in a five hundred ton brig, the *Blanche Macgregor*—"

Here Fern discarded the scraper and, half-turning round, composed himself into an anecdotal attitude, with an occasional internal revolution of his quid; while I, seeing that he was on the right tack, drew my feet up on the bin and settled myself into position, with my chin resting on my knees and hands clasping my legs, for the full enjoyment of the coming yarn.

"A five hundred ton brig she were, an' the skipper was a north-countryman. Off Anticosti we gets becalmed one Saturday night an' drops anchor, for there's a strong current from the St. Lawrence there, an' we should ha' drifted on to the island if we hadn't. Next day was Sunday, an' still there wasn't a breath of wind. When it come arternoon the ship was all quiet like; the skipper he'd got tired o' whistling for a

breeze an' bossing round with his hands in his pockets, so he'd settled down in his big canvas chair on the poop wi' a long pipe an' a glass o' grog alongside him, an' the rest of us was for'ard, some washin' clothes, some playin' cards, most lyin' on their backs doin' nothing at all, when all on a suddint we hears a voice hailing the ship seemingly right under the bows. Up we all jumps an' looks over the bulwarks, an' sure enough there was nothing to be seen, 'cept the swirl o' the tide running past the cable. 'Well,' one says, 'that's rum!' an' another says, 'That was you!' an' in fact most on us put it down to a young limb of a boy called Bill Masters, who was always up to some monkey trick or other, though he swore as he'd never said nothing, an' run to the side like the rest. So presently we all settles down again, but we hadn't been no more'n two minutes afore we hears the hail again. 'Blanche Macgregor, ahoy!' it says quite close to us, just as plain as you hears me now, with a long sing out to the 'ahoy!' at the end. We rushes to the bulwarks again, feelin' certain this time there must be a boat alongside, but when we finds nothin' there as before, by George, some of 'em looked up rather pale an' began to ask each other in a whisper what on airth it could be. Then somebody says, 'That's that young Bill!' and we all feels quite relieved an' says, 'Why in course it is!' an' goes for Bill. But no sooner was he knocked head over heels down the foke'sle ladder, where he lies snivelling at the bottom, an' the bo'sen was s'lecting a lanyard for to foller him with, than the voice comes again plainer than ever: 'Blanche Macgregor, ahoy! ahoy!'—twice this time. None on us goes to the side any more then, but we all took to our heels and rushed aft as hard as we could go, main scared I can tell you; for we sees then that there was somethin' in it more'n flesh an' blood could take soundings of. The noise woke the skipper, an' he jumps out of his chair an' looks over the poop at us on the deck below, an' asks what's the matter. None on us liked to say, but at last the carpenter speaks up an' says how we had heard somebody hailing the ship.

"'Hailing the ship!' roars the old man in a passion; 'it's my belief you've all been hailing some o' that infernal square-face\* you've been buying ashore; you're drunk, all the lot of you. Get away for'ard an' don't let me hear any more, or some of you'll be hailing a rope's end!'

"Well, we slunk off, feelin' pretty small; but just as we reached the waist, we hears young Bill Masters, who had tumbled out of the foke'sle, yell out, 'Lord ha mercy; look there!' an' come flyin' towards us. An' I can tell you, when I see what was comin' up over the bows, all my inside seemed to go to ice.

"There was a man's head and shoulders rising over the bulwarks, but such a head an' such a face as nobody ever see afore. Long hair an' long beard an' shaggy eyebrows, all like teased out rope-yarn, an' big round eyes, an' a sort o' pretty coloured skin, an' the arms an' breast covered with closesmooth seaweed, like the green lavery you see on the rocks at low tide. But when he draws hisself up by the arms he flings up a big fish's tail like a dolphin's instead of legs into the air, an' jerks hisself inboard, where he falls with a whack on the deck, an' then I see it were a merman. Back we runs again an' all huddles behind the mainmast on the larboard side, for the merman was coming aft at full speed on the other—flop, flop, flop, like a fish hops about out o' the water, only more reg'ler an' as straight as a line, with his head up an' a sort of snakey movement from his breast to his tail that sends him along at the rate o' knots. The skipper heard us run back an' jumps out of his chair with an oath, but when he sees what was coming towards him, his long pipe drops from his hand an' he stands with his hair nearly liftin' his broad-brimmed Panama an' his face as white as a sheet. As soon as the merman got to the break of the poop, he sot up straight, throwing a round turn in his tail to lean back on.

"'Air you the cap'en of this ship?' he says.

"'Yes, sir!' says the skipper, wery humble an' shakin' all over; 'yes, sir, at your sarvice.'

"'I've hailed your vessel three times, cap'en—I read her name on the bow down below—an' nobody was perlite enough to answer, so I've come up the cable,' says the merman, severe like.

"'I'm wery sorry, sir, as you should have had so much trouble,' puts in the cap'en; 'wot kin I have the pleasure of doin' for you?'

"'Well, it aint much,' says the merman, a bit softer, 'but you've bin and dropped your anchor right in front of our chapel door, an' our folks can't get in. We didn't have no meetin' this mornin', an' the ladies say they must have their reg'ler Sunday evenin' to-night, so we'd take it as a great

\* Hollands or cheap gin in square bottles.



favour if you'd shift your anchor a couple of fathoms or so to the east'ard, afore half-past seven.'

"Just then, the steward put his head up through the cabin sky-light, an' quietly shoves the skipper's gun, loaded an' full cock, into his hand; but the merman was too quick for him, an' before he could get the gun to his shoulder, he was gone over the side and disappeared under water with a flop of his tail again' the ship's side. For a minute or two, nobody spoke or moved, an' there wasn't a sound to be heard 'cept the lap o' the water again' the side an' the clank o' the tiller-chains, an' we all seemed dazed like. The mate was the first to speak.

"'Shall we haul taut the cable an' lift the anchor, sir?' says he, touching his cap to the skipper, who was still standin' on the break of the poop above.

"That seemed to wake him up, for he'd been standin' in a sort of dream, wonderin' whether he was asleep or whether he'd had one Sunday tot of rum too many.

"'Not you!' he roars out, 'this is some lubberly trick you've been playing! I'll teach you to sky-lark with me! I'll log the whole lot of you—I'll fine you two days' pay! Be off, will you? If any man talks about shifting that anchor, I'll clap him in irons!'

"Off we goes, for'ard again, an' the bo'sen pipes all hands down to supper. We didn't talk about many other things besides the merman, you may suppose; but it was a curious thing that no two of us could agree 'xactly about what he was like. Some said he were as tall as the mainmast an' some said he warn't no taller than the main-hatch combing. I said he were about the build of a thickset man, only about nine foot long on account of the fish-tail, an' some on us went on deck to measure the wet trails, but the old man caught sight of us an' made us squeegee it out directly. But we all said amongst ourselves as how somethin' would come of it, if he didn't haul up the mud-hook; an' somethin' did come of it very soon.

"I shall never forgit that night. We had finished supper an' was all on deck in the second dog-watch; there was no wind yet, an' everything was quiet, when three bells went. An' then we all remembered that it was at three bells as the merman had said their chapel was to begin. But afore we could speak a word, the water was all alive as if millions of fish was playin' around, not jumpin' or splashin', but seem-

in'ly just below the surface—all alive an' all afire, too, with the glint o' thousands of lookin'-glasses flashin' in all directions. An' it got more an' more, till bimeby in the middle watch we goes an' prays the skipper for Heaven's sake to shift the anchor, an' he jumps on deck with a oath in his mouth, when on a suddint he stops an' shrieks out, 'She's adrift—we're lost!'

"An' sure she was. The critters had knocked the bolt out o' the shackle that bent the anchor on to the cable just at chapel-time, for we must ha' drifted better nor six miles; an' before he could get to the wheel, the breakers seemed to come up out of the dark on our starboard beam, an' the ship struck on the rocks with a crash that flung us all off our feet an' brought her top-hamper down about us. An' in the breakers was the glint of the lookin'-glasses, an' some on 'em arterwards said they heard the ringing of church bells.

"The spanker-boom fell on the skipper an' killed him on the spot. The rest on us managed to get on to the island at daylight, all but the steward—him that loaded the gun; a big wave come up an' took him back just as he reached the last rock safely, an' he never rose no more. An' though you don't see no mermaids now, you can of'en an' of'en see the glint o' their lookin'-glasses in the water on stormy nights—fuzz-friz, some calls it, but I know better. I ought to know somethin' about it. If I hadn't knowed somethin' of mermaids when I were wrecked in the South Seas, them islanders would ha' eat—"

"But, Fern," I interpolated, putting the conversational helm hard over to steer clear of this topical Charybdis, "why don't we see them now?"

"Well, I can tell you, an' there's not many men alive as can. When I—you see, sir, you makes a half hitch and reeves the end o' the line through the bight, like this—so."

From a suddenly assumed respectful tone, and his catching up the end of the fore top-sail clewline, which lay hard-by him, and manipulating it in illustration of his wholly irrelevant remark, I inferred that the second officer, to whose watch I belonged, had hove within the horizon of Fern's solitary eye. We youngsters were not allowed to go forward among the sailors except now and again under pretext of learning knots and splices, so I became engrossed exceedingly in the mysteries of the bowline then in explication. I may say, however, that this show of instruction

on Fern's part was not designed so much to save me from a sharp reprimand, or to ensure the continued pleasure of my society, as to account for the temporary disuse of the scraper. Our confab was not interrupted, so, dropping the rope again, he resumed :

"I were shipmates with the wery man as were the cause of it, an' I got it from his own lips, hisself an' no other. We was cruisin' in the West Indies, an' taking in stores afore goin' south. That was in the *Bluesifits*, a fine barque-rigged vessel of eight hunderd tons ; carried fore an' main skysails an' had a big white 'orse for a figger-head."

"The *Bucephalus* !" I exclaimed, by sudden inspiration. But I bit my tongue directly the word had slipped out, for the old man had come to a dead halt, and slowly rolled his one eye round at me with a baleful glare.

"Wot did I say ?" he demanded severely.

"All right, Fern, go on !"

But Fern was not all right, and would not go on. His finer feelings had been hurt by the implied inaccuracy of his classical pronunciation, and he took up the scraper for a moment with an offended air. But another idea struck him.

"Have you got any more o' that 'baccy ?"

I handed him the plug, and he wreaked his vengeance on that to such an extent, that the poor little remnant which went back into my pocket was not bigger than the reserve piece he stowed away in his cap ; while the magnitude of his fresh quid rendered his voice lusciously indistinct during the rest of his narration.

"Takin' in stores, we was, 'here an' there, an' was pretty near provisioned in full ; the last place we put into was Grenada for sugar an' rum. Didn't go into the bay, but anchored in the roadstead outside St. George's. The casks o' rum came off in a lighter an' we was hoisting 'em in as fast as we could, for it was close on sunset an' no twilight there, an' we was to sail the same night, as the wind was fair. My mate, Josh Stevens, was down in the lighter, helping the niggers to sling the casks. It was just dark as he got the last one in the sling, but somehow it slipped as we hoisted it over the gunwale of the boat and fell into the sea with a splash. Spirit-casks was different things in them days to what they is now—bound with thick iron an' built of hard-wood staves as heavy as iron, so down goes this 'ere cask to the bottom like a twenty-four pun' shot. If it

had been daylight, no doubt you might ha' seen it lyin' there, for the water off Grenada's as clear as crystal ; I've seen the ship's anchor lyin' on the white sand fathoms deep many a time ; an' you can look down an' see the coral an' weed growing in trees an' bushes wi' bright-coloured fishes an' sea-snakes a-flyin' in an' out between 'em like birds, an' all sorts o' shells crawlin' about. But 'twas pitch dark now, an' you couldn't see the lighter on the top, much less the barrel at the bottom. The skipper was standin' by, hurrying us up, when it went over—a good man he were, but a devil when his temper got out, an' when he hears this cask go splash he went clean off his head, an' stamped an' swore like a madman. Josh Stevens cried out from below that it warn't his fault, but 'twas no good. 'Look here !' he yelled out, leavin' on to the rail foam'in' an' cursin', an' holding on by the backstays while he hung over, 'look here, you——'" (the gem of the gallant captain's speech, picked out from the elaborate setting of profanity in which it was enshrined, consisted of the observation that the unfortunate Mr. Stevens should go after the lost cask of spirits). "When Josh heard that, he sang out 'Ay ay, sir !' sad like, but just as cool as anything ; an' there was another splash in the dark down below, an' the niggers in the boat called out, 'De man gone, sah !' Well, the skipper was taken aback then, an' we all listened with our hands to our ears to hear him come up again, an' presently the skipper called out with his voice all quaverin', 'Come on board, you fool !' for you see he was sorry then for the rage he'd bin in, an' frightened to think as how he'd sent the man to his death ; but there was no answer. Then he ordered all the boats to be lowered, an' we pulled round an' round the ship far an' near for hours, but no sign of poor Josh could we see. I was stroke of the cap'en's gig ; the cap'en hisself steered her all the time, an' when he give orders about two in the mornin' to return to the ship, I could see by the light of the lantern in the bucket at his feet as he sat in the stern-sheets that his face was as pale as death, but he never said a word. His was the last boat to be pulled up, an' he stood up while we hitched her on to the falls, with his hand shading his eyes, looking into the black night to the last moment. But just arter we got on board an' all hands was piped to stations for sailing, the leadsman in the chains says he hears a shout. Presently we all hears it repeated, an' ten

minutes later the lighter that had sheered off when the boats was lowered, comes alongside with the niggers sweating at their long oars like bulls. And in the bottom of the boat was Josh, an' not only Josh but the barrel of rum, all dripping wet. Josh was lyin' there like one dead, an' had to be slung an' hoisted like the barrel, but we didn't let neither on 'em slip this time, you bet. The skipper asked no questions, but chucks a handful of dollars into the lighter, an' away we went.

"Next day Josh come round, but never spoke a word about where he'd bin to under the sea to no livin' soul, till he told me one night many months arter, as we lay off Iquique. But afore then, a sing'lar thing happened. When that cask was broached, it turned out to be full o' salt water instead o' rum. Josh heard of it but he didn't say nothin', an' the skipper never asked no question or said a word. But not long arter that, Josh told me the whole sarcumstance.

"When I heard the old man take on so that night," he said, "I was desp'rate riled, for 'twas no fault o' mine that it slipped from the sling; my monkey was up, an', thinks I, I'll go down an' see if I can touch it anyhow, an' without any more thought down I goes. I kin dive pretty well, as you know, an' stayed down a good spell, but no cask could I find among the weed, an' I was just feelin' like to bust an' turnin' for the top again, when I found I was tangled in a long creeping branch. I didn't lose my head, but turned round to free myself, when in strugglin' I seemed to slip downwards instead of up through the boughs of the weed, an' all on a suddint I finds myself in a sort of a garden, light as day, with green grass a-growing underfoot an' flowers an' trees overhead meeting like a roof, only all seaweed. Right in front was a lot of pillars and arches built of white coral that stretched away an' away till they was lost, like lookin' in the two big lookin'-glasses what faces each other in the cap'en's state-room, an' in an' out o' these arches queer sorts o' fishes was glidin' about, for 'twas all water down there, but somehow I seemed to find my breath all right an' not want to come up. An' the light seemed to fill the place warm like mild sunshine, for overhead where the weeds met it was black as night, but the roof was studded wi' star-fishes an' iniminies all colours of the rainbow. But what struck me first was that there cask lyin' on the ground, an' round it was a school of mermaids an'

mermen, lookin' at it an' apparently wond'ring what it was, for they whisked it round an' round wi' the eddy of their tails an' fingered it all over. All at once, one catches sight o' me an' says: "Here's a man," she says, "from the dry land!" "No, miss," I says, touchin' my cap, "beggin' o' your parding, I'm a sailor, I am." "Kin you tell us wot this is, sir?" she says. "I kin," I says; "that's rum, that is." "Wot's rum?" she says. "Rum is the staff o' life," I says. "Law!" she says, "how funny! An' wot do you do with it, sir?" "Drink it," I says. Says she: "Would you be so kind an' perlite, sir, as to show us how you do it?" "Certingly," I says; "hev' you got a cup handy?" So they brings me a half-pint shell, an' I knocks the bung out an' draws a shellful. "But," says I, "I couldn't think o' drinkin' afore ladies. Arter you, miss," I says, passin' the shell. Well, there was a lot o' gigglin' an' whisp'rin', but at last she drinks it off an' seems to like it; an' then the others has a try at it an' the mermen too, me taking a shell in between each to show them the way, till at last we got very cumferble an' the cask was empty. Then I suddinly remembers as it were about time for me to be gettin' back, an' I gets up an' says they'd have to 'xuse me 'cause my leave was up. But the mermaid as had spoke me first—she was settin' on my knee—she says: "Don't go yet!" she says, "what's your hurry?" An' with that she shakes her long golden hair, an' glimpses out at me under her eyelids. Nice-looking gal she were, too. But I said I must take the barrel back, as 'twas pertickler. Howsumever, she was like the rest of her sect and wouldn't take no for a answer, so she says: "It's a pity as a bein' like you should be wasted up there. Stay an' be one of us. Stay an' be mine!" an' blow me if she didn't heave her arms round my neck. An' all the others joins in chorus, an' comes round puttin' their cheeks again' mine, an' huggin', an' kissin', an' sayin', "Stay with us, thou lovely bein' from the dry land!" But all the mermen stood back leanin' again' the arches, lookin' precious glum, so thinks I, there'll be a row here presently, an' I makes a jump for the cask, shoves the bung in (forgittin' that the water had been running in all this while), takes it up, an' makes a spring for the roof with all that crowd of mermaids in chase. I should never ha' got away if it hadn't ha' been for the mermen; but they helped me through the weed, an' carried the barrel up for me.



I come up alongside the lighter an' was lifted in just as I fainted, or mayhap I should ha' been a merman myself now."

"That's what Josh told me, hisself an' no other, an' never said no to a word of it, for six weeks arter that we got wrecked together an' the savages eat him. They'd got up a yarn on board previous that the dropping the cask over was a plant between him an' the niggers, an' that there was a line fast to it when it went, so that it was hauled in again directly; an' that they took it ashore in the lighter an' Josh, too, an' paid him the money agreed, an' emptied the cask an' filled it up with salt water, an' that Josh got drunk afore he was brought back to the ship. But I knows better, an' 'cause why? Here's a proof of it. Why don't we see no mermaids now, says you? 'Cause ever since they tasted that rum an' liked it so, they've been wanting some more, an' the news has spread among 'em all over the world; so, instead of comin' up on the rocks now an' singin', they're down searchin' all the old wrecks and sunk ships, lookin' for rum-barrels. That's how 'tis people says there aint no mermaids now!"

"But, Fern, how is it the salt water didn't mix with the rum when they drank it out of the shell?"

"There goes eight bells!" said Fern, who invariably went below the instant his watch on deck was up, and disappeared forthwith.

"What have you been doing forward?" growled the second officer, as I went aft to report the bell.

"Jipson's been—been showing me knots, sir!" I stammered, rather confused.

"Showing you knots? Ah, and jawing to you, I suppose, all the time?"

"He—he told me one or two stories about ships, sir, while he was showing me."

"Yarns, boy; spun you yarns, you mean," said the second officer, turning away with a grim smile; "never say 'telling stories' at sea!"

### FAMILY GHOSTS.

It is just a year since I told the readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* the story of the Glamis ghosts—terrible, grim, various, and numerous. No nobleman in the United Kingdom, most certainly none abroad, has so fine a head of spectres in his own preserves as Lord Strathmore; but less richly endowed ghost-

owners have specimens unique each in its way, and without that wearisome likeness which deprives the "hereditary curse" of any element of interest. It is too sorrowfully true that insanity and consumption are to a certain extent hereditary, and that gruesome prophecies may have been invented to agree with them long after they were generally recognised, but they do not say much for the fertility of the prophetic mind. Such stories appertain only to noble families. Nobody ever heard of a plebeian owning a family ghost. A banshee is equivalent to a patent of nobility, and in some parts of Ireland and Scotland the want of a genuine ghost attached to the premises is felt almost as a flaw in the pedigree, as a bar sinister.

I have already remarked that family curses are monotonous, and at times rather silly, but family ghosts are not to be dismissed in the same manner. I have not, myself, the slightest belief in supernatural manifestations, but, for all that, I have been compelled to leave a house because no servant would stop in it.

To all my observations my people simply responded, quite quietly and respectfully, that they would rather leave. Now, I knew that if one left I had better dismiss all, lest one should remain to tell the tale, but no option was left me and three batches succeeded before I could get one to stay. My first measure was to absolutely forbid all old family servants to come near the place. I confess that I hate, condemn, and thoroughly disbelieve in the "faithful retainer." He may be the best person in the world, but to me he is abhorrent. I hate Caleb Balderstone, who was too stupid to get credit in the neighbourhood. I loathe Leporello, whose conduct, when the ghost of the Commander comes to supper, is ridiculous, and I execrate Davus, Mascarille, Scapin, and the whole series of subsequent blackguards of similar type. What I complain of is that my servants left me simply because they heard noises. It is said, in one of the popular remarks most conspicuous for idiocy, that murder will out. Ghost stories assuredly will. I dwell in the heart of London, where there are noises enough and to spare, and my people actually objected to cries of the most trivial kind. So far as I could ascertain, a noise like an explosion, or the report of a pistol, was heard early in the morning, and at other hours various curious ringings and rattlings. I come home from work at all hours, but I never, to my great

regret, heard anything remarkable in my life. I should have liked it. To begin with it would have been as good as sixteen quarterings of nobility, and, moreover, would have, perhaps, given me the motive for that "original" English drama which I have contemplated for many years past. But there was nothing. And my servants went, and went, until the baker's young man, who appears to have been the mouth-piece of local tradition, was happily married and set up in business in a remote parish. I do not wish anybody any harm, especially at Christmas-tide, but I cannot wish that young man success in his business, for he was the cause of infinite annoyance.

My ghost was a poor thing, and nowise akin to the noble long-descended ghosts of antique families, such as the Boy of Corbie; the braceleted lady of the Beresfords; the rustling ghost—a mere frou-frou of a silken robe—at Newburgh Priory; the dead housekeeper who walks the long corridors and tapestried rooms at Rufford. It was very naught as compared with the dead drummer of the Ogilvies; of the dead coachman and phantom carriage and horses which drive up to the door of Donington when a Hastings is to die. These are noble ghosts, like the card-player at Glamis, who goes on playing, till Doomsday, at the table over which he stabbed his opponent, and like that I am now about to discuss—a very noble ghost indeed, who appears only with proper ghost music, and that playing the "genteelst of tunes."

The ghost of whom I propose to discuss is not an English ghost. That, I admit, as a Briton, is a defect; but, on the other hand, it still exists. It showed its power only the other day, and frightened solid British diplomatic personages, which is saying a great deal. In telling the story, I am compelled, for obvious reasons, to suppress the names of the English diplomats, but, beyond this, I will tell the incident which occurred as related by them. This story is absolutely true.

I may say of husband and wife, that no two persons less likely to be influenced by ghost stories ever lived. The husband is a prosperous middle-aged man, born in the aristocratic and diplomatic purple, and his wife is a very handsome English matron of a type of beauty not generally supposed to be accessible to supernatural influences. Lord X. and Lady X. went to a great city in central Europe. Lord X. was appointed

resident, and her ladyship, of course, accompanied him. As it happened, the embassy was out of repair, and it became necessary to hire an occasional residence for the minister. An enterprising agent, or other interested person, recommended the long-disused mansion of the K—— family. It was visited, found suitable, and taken accordingly. A few days afterwards, Lord X., meeting in the street a friend, a native of the city, said:

"Pray come and see us. We are not, by the way, at the embassy, but at the K—— Palace."

"What!" said the native, evidently startled, "at that house?" and then, recovering himself, retreated with a commonplace remark and a promise to call.

There was nothing in this, of course. It would have been foolish to take notice of a sudden start. What it could mean was not worth thinking about; and the native grandee passed on.

Lord X. had moved into the K—— Palace, when he met another native and invited him to call. The native magnate's countenance underwent an extraordinary change.

"You tell me," he said faintly, "that you are living in the K—— Palace; that you have taken it for your family?"

"Most certainly, and signed the papers, and taken possession."

"I wish you joy, with all my heart," said the Hungarian noble. "Servus," he added, employing the Latin salutation of his country, as he raised his hat.

"Stop," said Lord X., now seriously discomposed; "do you know anything against the house? Are there bad smells? We think the house beautifully ventilated. The air seems very fresh and good."

"Nobody has, I believe, ever complained of want of ventilation in the K—— Palace. If anything, it is too breezy," replied the Hungarian with a queer smile, as he made his escape.

"Pooh," muttered Lord X. as his friend vanished; "foreigners are all alike, big and little. They never care how stuffy a place is, but a puff of fresh air seems to kill them." And in this fine old English frame of mind he went home to dinner.

No sooner did her ladyship come down, than her husband saw that something was amiss. She was pale and silent, and seemed unusually serious and thoughtful. There was nothing much the matter, not very much, only the servants had been quarrelling among themselves and some of them

had given warning. There was little beyond the possibility of discomfort in all this, had it not been for the cause of the uproar downstairs. Lady X. had valuable jewellery, and there was, of course, a considerable quantity of plate in use at the temporary residence of Britannia's representative. Stringent orders had, therefore, been given concerning the locking and bolting of the doors at night. This duty was entrusted to the cook, who, on the night of arrival, looked to the locks, bolts, and bars of the establishment, made all fast, and rejoined his fellow-servants in the housekeeper's room. Presently came a complaint that one of the outer doors must have been left open, inasmuch as a draught of cold air was felt throughout the lower part of the house. The cook said it was "stuff and nonsense," he was quite certain he had locked all up. A second complaint of a freezing blast in the kitchen itself roused the cook from his apathy, and with many expressions of disgust, he "went the rounds" of the palace again, and assured himself that all was fast. So far no harm was done, but on the second night a similar experience occurred, and the cook, thinking a practical joke was being played on him—for cooks are as irritable as those other poets who spoil paper instead of dinners—got into a passion. His language was declared by the solemn English butler to be "that awful," that he for one was not going to put up with it. He had lived with Lord this and the Duke of that before he came to Lord X., and no such language had ever been used to him. Lady X.'s own maid also wished to go. The house was draughty, she said, "and nobody knew where the draughts came from. They rushed past, and made a noise, ugh! such a noise. Somethink" was wrong, and "the sooner her ladyship could suit herself the better."

Now, even triply blessed creatures with titles depend a great deal on those whom the grand old Tory nobleman classed as "the lower orders." It is disagreeable to lose the friends of one's youth, but it can be borne, while to lose the cook who can prepare bouillabaisse or golacz with equal skill is a nuisance to be avoided if possible. A lady's-maid, too, who knows her business, is not easily replaced. So Lord and Lady X. agreed that the whole business was a bore of the first magnitude, and then, like sensible people, ate their dinner, went into society afterwards, and forgot

their troubles altogether. Next morning Lord X. went to shoot wildfowl on the Danube, and remained absent for several days.

When he returned to the city and his house he was horror-struck at the change in his wife, who seemed thin, and pale, and also strangely hysterical. The cook was, happily, still faithful, but several of the servants, including all the foreigners and the lady's-maid, had gone, the latter declaring that, much as she was "beholden to my lady," she would sacrifice her wages rather than sleep another night in the K— Palace.

Lady X. was naturally in dismay at this domestic revolution. But this was not all. She herself was evidently greatly terrified. Being a highly cultivated and very sensible as well as beautiful woman, she had tried to stamp out the impression of something weird and uncanny in the palace, but had obviously failed in the attempt. The vast and luxuriously-furnished bedchamber had proved uninhabitable, and she had taken refuge in a smaller room, but not before being frightened almost to death. What had she seen? Nothing whatever—absolutely nothing! But no sooner had midnight tolled from the cathedral spire than a rush of cold air came into the room, as if all the doors and windows were open. And that was not all. Nothing was to be seen; but there was something, a very small thing, yet distinct enough to be heard. It was the flapping of wings. On the night following Lord X.'s departure, his wife had been awakened by a sudden chill, and turning up the lamp, got out of bed and examined the doors and windows. All were secure; but still there was a palpable disturbance in the atmosphere. And there was, at intervals, a slight sound as of the flapping of wings. Once it seemed to Lady X. that some flying creature, bird or bat, passed close to her cheek. The sound was distinct, and the strokes of the air as the thing flew past were distinctly perceptible. Then there was more fluttering, until it seemed that the flying thing settled on the canopy of the great state bed. And then the air became still. Lady X., thinking it not impossible that bats might have made a lodgment in the long uninhabited palace, went to sleep, and forgot the matter till she was aroused again by a sudden chill, again accompanied by the flapping of wings.

This occurred in the early morning, and



she at once aroused the household, and a hunt for possible bats was instituted. It was fruitless, and when it was over, somebody recollected that it was winter time, and that bats hybernate instead of flying about in cold weather. By the time this observation was made, a general panic prevailed, and so strong was the contagion that Lady X. herself became nervous and low-spirited. She determined, however, not to be daunted by the bat, or whatever it was, and once more retired to rest in the state bedchamber. Falling into a sort of half-dozze, she was awakened by the fluttering of some creature round her head. She could hear the strokes of the wing, and feel each wave of the agitated air as it struck upon her cheek. Greatly startled and terrified, she sprang to her feet and immediately experienced the sensation of all the doors and windows being open. She called assistance, and a rigid perquisition was instituted. A pigeon might have come down the chimney, but the pigeon would remain, and again, the chances of two pigeons going down the same chimney two nights running seemed very small. Moreover, the rushing of wings had been heard and felt in sundry passages and corridors, and the servants had been terribly frightened.

Lord X., who like his cook had seen and heard nothing, thought the whole business hysterical folly, but he left the K—— Palace, nevertheless, at once, and it could probably be rented now at a very moderate price. Perhaps even a premium would be offered to anybody who would undertake to live down the ghost.

For, as Lord X. afterwards found out, the phantom bat is a genuine family ghost. It would seem that of the princely race who once inhabited the palace, and whose name it bears, there was one lady notorious for errors, if not for crimes. As the story goes, her great desire was for a child, an heir to the coronet, and on one occasion she uttered this wish in reckless language accompanied by some horrible imprecation. Her progeny proved to be a monster of vampire form with great wings. No sooner did the unhappy mother see the dreadful creature, than she shrieked "Kill it! kill it! kill it!" And it was destroyed, but the palace has never since been habitable.

I cannot guarantee the truth of this part of the story. The supposed events happened a long way off and a long time

ago. But the narrative of Lord and Lady X.'s experience is absolutely true, and can be vouched for by many "persons of quality."

### ONE CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

#### A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

TREGANNION in Cornwall is not to be found upon any map; but Tregannion, some eighty years ago, was a place of no small importance to a certain section of the community. When the profession of smuggler was one of some dignity, and was surrounded by a halo of romance, Tregannion was as flourishing a little collection of cottages as there was on the south coast. The whole place consisted of but some score cottages clustered round a toy church, and wedged in between two rugged masses of cliff. A single street, a solitary public-house, and one little quay sufficed for the wants of the population, which, all told, might perhaps, in the prosperous days of yore, amount to half a hundred souls.

News and information travelled but slowly to the remoter corners of our island at the beginning of the present century, so that Tregannion was suffered to flourish in its own way for some time before the Commissioners of Excise felt it absolutely necessary to send an active officer there for the protection of their interests. Tregannion resented this interference, and the luckless officer—one Lieutenant Porter of His Majesty's Navy—was murdered. So, when Lieutenant Charlwood, his successor, arrived, with the fullest powers to stamp out smuggling and to bring the murderers to justice, he found his post no sinecure. Tregannion, as it knew but little of the outside world, cared but little about it. So long as Tregannion luggers made good runs, and so long as Tregannion purses could jingle ill-gotten pieces, revolutions, earthquakes, pestilences, or famines might occur in every other shire in the land without awakening a particle of alarm or sympathy in the bosoms of the inhabitants of Tregannion. So Lieutenant Charlwood with a score of picked men occupied a range of white huts on one of the cliffs overlooking the innocent little village and harbour.

Had it not been for the arduous and exciting nature of the service upon which he was employed, Charlwood would have found existence at Tregannion monotonous enough. There were but four persons with whom he could associate. These were the parson, the Reverend Mr. Carey; the local medical

man, Dr. Windle; and an old Dutchman, one Cornelius Van der Meulen, who lived with his daughter in a great solitary white house situated upon the same cliff as the preventive station.

Mr. Carey and Dr. Windle were all very well. They had been gentlemen once no doubt, but long association with the rough spirits of Tregannion, and long absence from the civilised world, had rendered them little superior in manner and speech to the semi-nautical louts, amongst whom the one occasionally preached and the other dispensed medicines.

But with the old Dutchman the lieutenant struck up a fast friendship, and with Dolly Van der Meulen he almost became intimate. No one knew whence old Van der Meulen had come. He had lived at the Cliff House for the past quarter of a century, but rarely went even into the village. He seemed to have means, for the house—at least that part of it which was occupied—was well, and even luxuriously furnished, and he had no visible occupation. Charlwood's intimacy with Dolly arose in the first instance from compassion—compassion for a pretty, lively girl condemned to spend a lonely existence in a dismal old house with an eccentric old man. From compassion to love is but a short step, and Charlwood had not been six weeks at the station before he found himself head over ears in love with Dolly Van der Meulen. She was just the sort of girl, he said, he had always dreamed of for a wife. Thoroughly simple and homely in her tastes, she had the ease and grace of manner which, as a rule, sit naturally only upon women of the world. But what intensified his passion was to see that his love was returned. Dolly had never associated with men, and the appearance of a handsome young officer upon the limited stage of her life was to her a sort of vision. Perhaps she, in her turn, compassionated him upon being cast away in such a desolate, uncouth corner of the world. At any rate they met often, and walked together often.

But there was a rival.

Amongst the loungers at The Brig in Tregannion, was a long slouching fellow named Dan Pearce. To look at he was a lubber, to talk to he seemed half-witted, but Charlwood soon found out that, behind the low retreating forehead and the heavy square chin of Dan Pearce, there was as crafty and keen an intelligence as any in the place. Dan Pearce was con-

stantly at the Cliff House, and when at the Cliff House was invariably in close proximity to Dolly, ogling her with his great fish-like eyes, stammering out uncouth compliments in the broadest of dialects, and hanging about her like a great clumsy lap-dog. Dolly snubbed him when her father was away, but in his presence treated her swain, if not with cordiality, at least with toleration. Charlwood puzzled his brains to find out how so incongruous a being could have obtained a footing in the Cliff House, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. To cheer the solitude of his long evenings, the lieutenant often asked the parson, or the doctor, or old Van der Meulen to dine with him, and upon these occasions would ask them about Dan Pearce, but was never able to get any direct information about him.

Meanwhile he had been so active and assiduous that the contraband trade of Tregannion dwindled to nothing—but, of course, though this was gratifying to his self-esteem, it brought him and his men into very bad odour. On more than one occasion individual preventive men were very roughly handled on the quay of Tregannion, and he himself was the recipient of many an ill-spelt, ill-written epistle, threatening him with death. But he treated the feeling with contempt—only one thing annoyed him, and that was that he had not received a single reply to his very satisfactory despatches to Plymouth, the local head-centre of the coastguard.

"Hang it!" he would say, "many a man in the service has been promoted and even decorated for doing less than I have. I'm condemned to pass the best years of my life in this hole, as a sort of human rat-catcher, when I might be tackling the French, and I don't even get a compliment, much less a step or an increase of pay."

As a rule he sent his despatches to Fowey—the nearest post town, some twelve miles away, under the care of a boy who was employed in the garden of the Cliff House. It suddenly occurred to the lieutenant that this boy might not be entirely trustworthy, so one evening he posted himself behind a clump of trees bordering the road by which the boy must pass, some five or six miles on the way. He waited for three or four hours, but the boy did not appear at all. Luckily the despatches were dummies. Here was the solution of the question of replies to his budgets; now he had to discover the delinquent. So one night, instead of trusting the bag to the boy, he took it

himself. He started at the same hour that the boy usually did, and even, through Dolly, borrowed the old Dutchman's pony. The night was very dark, and the ruse was successful. Not more than half a mile on the road, a figure with a lantern sprang out, crying, "Why the devil are you going so fast to-night, boy? Pull up!"

The lieutenant made himself as small as possible behind the pony's head, allowed the speaker to approach him, and suddenly seized him by the collar. It was Dan Pearce. When Pearce saw how he had been deceived, with a terrible oath he shook himself clear and vanished in the darkness.

"There'll be trouble with that youth, I can see," said the lieutenant to himself as he rode back. For the future he sent his despatches by one of his men, and consequently received from time to time very flattering notices of his services from the powers at Plymouth. Still he was uneasy in his mind. Apparently nothing could be more absolute than the check given to the smuggling trade at Tregannion; scarcely a boat put to sea, the quay was always deserted, and The Brig always full. He had been at the station now nearly three months, and only two runs had been attempted. But there were indications, familiar only to the practised eye, that behind the scenes something was going on. One hazy morning a large schooner was observed off Quelly Point; then the fog hid her from view, and when it finally dissipated, there was no schooner to be seen. A coast-guard outpost met Dan Pearce one dark night riding furiously along the Fowey Road; upon another occasion he was observed on the beach at Quelly Bay talking earnestly to the doctor; for several Sundays in succession the parson held no service in the little church; several strangers had arrived in Tregannion, and meetings with closed doors were held at The Brig; there was a great deal of earnest conversation going on between knots of men—knots which dispersed at the approach of a preventive man—altogether, Charlwood deemed it necessary to be on his guard and to trust nobody.

One evening old Van der Meulen came to see him. The old fellow affected a great liking for the young lieutenant and would spend hours yarning with him, smoking a pipe with a bowl like the hull of one of his native galliots, and drinking the strongest of schnapps.

"Vell, mine lewtenant," he said as they drew their chairs round the fire—"vell—ant vot noosh have you of our friends the

runners? I tink you have frightened dem. In course I hears a great deal about dem."

"Yes," thought Charlwood, glancing keenly at the old man, "I expect you do."

Utterly unconcerned at the look which the lieutenant meant to be piercing, Van der Meulen went on: "But I must say dat I have never known dem so quiet as since you have been here——"

"You pay me a great compliment," said Charlwood, "but I tell you frankly, I don't think it's over yet. Now, for instance, I am sure you will pardon me if I say I cannot understand how you can admit such a man as Dan Pearce to such intimacy as you do. Of course it is no business of mine, but if you knew as much about him as I do——"

"Know as much about Dan as you do!" interrupted the old man somewhat pettishly. "Why, mine very goot friend, Dan Pearce has been friend of mine many years. I give to you dat he is of uncertain temper, but he is very goot man is Dan, very goot man. Besides, you know he is de fiancé of my daughter Dolly."

The lieutenant fairly jumped from his chair. "Engaged to Dolly!" he said. "No, Van der Meulen, you're joking with me. Is it really true?"

"Yaes," said the Dutchman without moving a muscle of his face, "dat is drue. Dan Pearce is engaged to my Dolly; and vat den?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied Charlwood, meaning of course not only something, but a great deal.

Then the conversation changed, and the pair sat until it was time to visit the posts. So Charlwood left the Dutchman at the path leading to the Cliff House, and pursued his way with the uneasy feeling that there was a mystery somewhere.

Charlwood received the answer "All's well" at each post, and returned to his hut. He had not been in more than five minutes, before he heard a tap at the door. Jumping up, pistol in hand, he opened it. John Logsdail, his chief petty officer, stood there.

"Well, Logsdail," said the lieutenant, "what is it?"

"Well, sir," said the tar with a salute, "I think it is right to tell you that old mounseer over there at the Cliff House has just drove off on the road to Fowey in a cart with two other chaps."

"That's a queer thing," said Charlwood, "why he only left me half an hour back. Could you make out who were his companions?"

"Not 'xactly, sir," said Logsdail, "but



one looked like that 'ere Dan Pearce, and t'other weren't unlike the doctor."

"All right" said the lieutenant, feeling that all was wrong, "keep a good look-out on the house."

The man saluted and went. Next morning the lieutenant was out early, and bent his steps towards the Cliff House. At a distance he could see Dolly in the garden, and he felt his heart beat hard as he approached her. Never had she seemed so bewitching, as she stood there with her beautiful brown hair clustering under a garden hat, and her dress tucked up so as to display the tightest of red-girt ankles in the most coquettish of shoes. She greeted him with an unusually cordial smile, and told him that she was alone at home.

"Then I may come in," said Charlwood. "Well," she said, "father's very particular, but he's away at Fowey on business—he has a lot of business, you know; I don't know what it is, but it often keeps him away at night, and brings him in contact with a lot of funny people. So come in."

The lieutenant vaulted over the low garden wall, and stood by her side. They talked for a long time about a variety of matters, before Charlwood could bring himself to broach the subject uppermost in his mind. At length he took one of her hands in each of his, and said:

"Dolly, I've heard very bad news of you. You know that I love you, truly, honestly, and honourably, and you have told me that you love me."

"And so I do," said Dolly, looking into his face with her bright eyes. "Who has told you anything bad of me?"

"Your father told me last night," answered the lieutenant, "that you were engaged to Dan Pearce."

"That I am engaged to Dan Pearce!" repeated Dolly. "Why, my dearest one, do you think I would see you and talk to you and tell you my heart as I have done so often, and all the time be doing the same to another man? And he, of all men! Surely you don't believe it?"

"No, I don't," said Charlwood, "but your father told me so distinctly, and I have seen Pearce so often here, that I made up my mind to see you and learn the truth at your own lips."

"Well then," said Dolly, "don't believe a word about it. I am mistress of my own heart, and no one has a right to give it away, just as they would give a flower or a glass of drink."

"No, my dear Dolly," answered the lieutenant, "but people have a right to steal your heart if they can."

"No, people have no such right," said Dolly with a coquettish toss of the head, "If I like to give it away, why——" Here she paused and became deeply interested in a knot of ribbon.

"Well?" said Charlwood.

"Why—well and good," answered Dolly, "I can do so—perhaps I have done so."

This was meant cruelly, but the young officer did not take it in that sense.

"To me," he said, "haven't you, Dolly? Say so. You've given it to me."

And as she murmured "Yes," he threw his arms round her, and without doubt would have kissed her, if a harsh voice had not broken in:

"Ullo! Ullo! Mine Gott and tunders! Dis is a pretty sight—very near kissing I tink dat time, only I came in and spoil de fun. I say, lewtenant, you know what I told you?"

And the old man drew Dolly's arm into his, and went into the house, leaving Charlwood standing in the garden, astonished and rather shame-faced.

Weeks passed, and yet nothing happened. Dan Pearce still hovered about the Cliff House, and once or twice endeavoured to make acquaintance with the preventive men. The strictest watch was kept day and night upon all roads and paths in the neighbourhood, yet nothing stirred. News reached Charlwood daily that, on account of the war, the contraband trade was more active than ever, yet nothing could be more peaceful and homely than the aspect of Tregannion. Van der Meulen came in as usual, talked, smoked, and drank, the parson and the doctor visited occasionally, but Dolly had never come near the hut since the affair in the garden. Yet the lieutenant was uneasy, not about the smuggling, for he trusted his men too well, and had made his dispositions too skillfully to be anxious on that account, but about the murder of poor Porter. The Government reward had been doubled; correspondence upon the subject was constantly passing between Plymouth or Fowey and Tregannion; the murderer was said to be in Cornwall, even in Tregannion, and the lieutenant was requested to spare no efforts in trying to discover the perpetrator or perpetrators of the crime. This was no easy job, for the folks in Tregannion stood aloof from the preventive men, and were bound by a sort of

Freemasonry to have no dealings whatever with them.

One evening the lieutenant was smoking a pipe by his solitary fireside, and was about to turn out for a round of inspection, when he heard a very gentle tap at the door. He opened it, and to his astonishment saw Dan Pearce.

"What on earth do you want?" asked Charlwood.

"Important business for you and me, sir," answered Pearce.

"Important business?" said Charlwood. "Why, what sort of important business can you have with me? Now look here, I'm up to most dodges, although I daresay you think I am not. I'm armed. Just throw up your hands."

Charlwood covered him with his pistol as he spoke, and Pearce submissively threw up his arms. Charlwood felt him over, and made certain that he had no knife or pistol about him.

"Now then," he said, "your business. Quick, for I have mine to attend to also."

"Nobody can hear us?" asked Pearce.

"Not a soul," answered the lieutenant.

"Up to now," said Pearce, "you've looked upon me as your enemy. I'm now going to be your friend. You love Dolly Van der Meulen."

"Well, what is that to you if I do?" asked the lieutenant impatiently.

"Well, this is what it is to you. She is promised to me by her father, in return for a signal service I have done him. You cannot prevent our marrying."

"Oh yes, I can," said Charlwood.

"No, you can't," pursued Pearce. "At a word from Van der Meulen, Mr. Carey will marry us on any day at any moment."

"A nice crew you are here," remarked the lieutenant, "all in the same boat."

"Yes," replied Pearce, "we're all tarred pretty well with the same brush. Anyhow, I will give her up to you, and not only that, I will deliver up the murderer of Lieutenant Porter, if you will undertake to pay me the Government reward of five hundred pounds."

Charlwood was astonished. "What guarantee have I that the man you deliver up is the real murderer?" he asked.

"You will see," answered Pearce. "I am the only man in Tregannion who saw the murder committed. Look here, do you know this?"

And he took a letter from his pocket which he handed to Charlwood. It was

one which he himself had written to his old shipmate shortly before the tragedy.

"Furthermore, I have a document at home," continued Pearce, "binding me to eternal secrecy at a price, in the writing of the murderer."

The lieutenant strode up and down the room. At length he sat down, and began to write. "The bearer of the present, Daniel Pearce——"

As he finished the second name, a bullet crashed through the window, and Dan Pearce fell pierced to the heart. Before the lieutenant had time to recover from the sudden shock, another flew past his head and buried itself in the wall. He ran to the door, and burst it open. Two or three preventive men, alarmed by the sound of firing, came hurrying up. All else was dark and silent as the grave.

#### CHAPTER II.

It was never known who fired the shot that killed Dan Pearce, but the lieutenant naturally guessed that the man who fired it was the murderer of Porter. Old Van der Meulen came in the next morning, apparently unconscious of what had taken place, and expressed great surprise and horror when he was told of it.

"Vell," he said, "dey are a rough lot here, and I have seen enough of dem to know dat dey tink no more of killing a man than of drinking a cup of spirits."

"The man who did it," said Charlwood, looking the old man full in the face, "knows something about poor Porter, and if I stay here twenty years I'll find it out."

The Dutchman puffed a great cloud of smoke out and said, "Dat you never will."

Christmas approached, and nothing happened to break the monotony of life on Tregannion Cliffs. The lieutenant thought of the jovial party assembled in the old family hall far away in Kent, but however much he longed to be with them, his sense of duty was too strong to allow him to apply even for a few days' leave of absence.

"At any rate," he thought, "I'll have a little celebration here on my own account." So he sent notes to the parson, the doctor, and old Van der Meulen, requesting their company to dinner on Christmas Day. Of course all three accepted cordially, and what gave him the greatest pleasure was that the old Dutchman actually asked to be allowed to bring Dolly.

Since the death of Pearce, the lieutenant had seen much more of his sweetheart, and

the old Dutchman, far from discouraging the meeting of the lovers, seemed anxious that they should be together as much as possible. So the lieutenant, intending to be politic as well as hospitable, resolved to ask the old man formally for the hand of his daughter after the Christmas dinner.

About a week before Christmas, Logs-dail the boatswain came into the lieutenant's quarters with a serious face.

"Well, Logs-dail, what is it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Well, sir," said the man, "we've been keepin' a sharp look-out on the Cliff House as you ordered, and we aint se'ed nothing, till last night. I was asleep in my bunk about a quarter afore twelve, when Tom Hoadley, what I'd put on watch, wakes me up and tells me there's something a goin' on at the Cliff House. So I goes out. All was dark, so dark you couldn't hardly see your hand. All of a sudden we sees a light in one of the windows of the Cliff House, which is very unusual at that time o'night. Then we gets nearer and we sees the old mounseer go out with a lantern in his hand. We follows him, keeping well behind the bushes, as far as Quelley Bay. There he meets other men with lanterns, and they all keep talkin' together about half an hour. Then mounseer goes back to the Cliff House, and a man rides off on the Fowey Road. Then all was dark again, and nothing more was to be seen."

"Very well, Logs-dail," said the lieutenant, "post off to Fowey. No, go by sea. Take the cutter, and tell the lieutenant in command with my compliments to send twenty men—a few every day—by Christmas Day. If anything's to be done, they'll do it then. All Tregannion knows about my dinner, and they think they'll catch us napping."

Christmas Day came in a violent snow-storm. The line between sea and sky was barely distinguishable, but the roar of the breakers upon the rocks below was audible above the sweep of the storm. The wild barren country looked doubly weird in its white shroud, and the only consolation that the poor blue-jackets on guard had, was that there would be a good dinner at mid-day and a chance of something even better before next dawn. The Fowey men had arrived as arranged, slouching in as rustics, or creeping along shore in fishing-boats. After having satisfied himself that everything was in readiness for immediate action, the lieutenant set about decorating his hut as best he could. With half-a-dozen

signal flags and some evergreens, with the aid of a couple of nimble-fingered blue-jackets, he made the little plain whitewashed room look quite bright and cheerful. After the mid-day meal, he arranged his liquor, unpacked a welcome hamper from home, started Jim the cook at his work, and by six o'clock was in full uniform, awaiting the arrival of his guests.

He had not long to wait, for as the clock struck the hour, the Rev. Mr. Carey and Dr. Windle arrived. From a slight incoherency in their speech, and a more than slight aroma of alcohol which they introduced with them, the lieutenant divined that they had been somewhat anticipating the festivities of the evening by potations on a private scale.

"What a night for a run!" said the parson.

"Aye," remarked the doctor, "I've known runs on worse nights than this. D'ye call to mind when Porter——"

Here he was interrupted by a violent kick from the parson, which did not pass unnoticed by Charlwood. Old Van der Meulen and his daughter were not long after in arriving. The old man was in excellent spirits, and shook hands with the doctor and the parson as if he had not seen them for years. Dolly was beautiful. Never had the lieutenant been so fascinated with her; the keen air had imparted a bright fresh colour to her cheeks, and she was becomingly, and for Tregannion, luxuriously dressed. Charlwood merely pressed her hand, but old Van der Meulen sung out, "Salute her, man, salute her! Dip your colours; I'll warrant that although you're a king's ship and she's a stranger, she'll hoist hers." So he kissed Dolly, bashfully as if it was for the first time, and Dolly hoisted her bright colours accordingly.

Two brawny tars brought in the dinner. The little room soon rang with jest and laughter. The parson's puns were outrageous, the doctor's yarns of old days side-splitting; old Van der Meulen retailed some of the choicest of his varied experiences, whilst Dolly laughed, and blushed, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy herself. When the plum pudding had disappeared, the table was cleared, clean glasses and pipes produced, and the chairs drawn round the fire.

"Excuse me one moment," said the old Dutchman before he sat down, and he went out, presently returning with two little casks under his arms. "Now, my vary good leutenant, I dake the liberty to offer you a



present. This is genuine right Hollands—schnapps of de first quality. You must not ask if it has paid duty. I can't get any more, much tanks to you and your fine fellows, but dat is no reason why you should not try it."

So one of the casks was broached, and glasses filled. The lieutenant rose.

"Before you drink, Miss Van der Meulen and gentlemen, I will ask you to join me in one toast. I'm not going to make a speech, but I'll simply ask you to drink, 'The King, and God bless him.'"

This was drunk with much enthusiasm, the parson and doctor in particular cheering till the tears ran down their cheeks. Even Dolly drank her glass of claret without leaving a dreg, a proceeding which made her cough and caused much merriment. Then the Dutchman gave a vigorous sea-song and chorus which he had picked up in the Southern Seas, which was none the less effective for being delivered in broken English. Then the Rev. Mr. Carey made a long speech about the fair sex, and asked the gentlemen to drink "Miss Dolly Van der Meulen."

"And her husband that is to be, whoever he is," added the old Dutchman, a speech which made Dolly and Charwood look silly and turn red, and caused a hearty burst of enthusiasm. Then the lieutenant gave an old Kentish plough song, and the doctor proposed the lieutenant's health. So the fun went on till the clock boomed twelve, when the doctor and the clergyman, after having found their legs with much difficulty, declared that it was time to go. The lieutenant, observing that they might mistake the path over the cliff edge for the right one, offered them an escort, but they sturdily refused, so, with much handshaking and renewal of good wishes, they went out into the night.

So Dolly, the lieutenant, and the old Dutchman were left together. The first cask had been emptied—principally by the two departed guests—and Van der Meulen broached the second, saying:

"Now, mine leutenant, de oder cask was good, but I tink you will find this better. I would not open it before those two barrels of men, for they had drunk just enough not to know good drink from bad. It is vat you call putting pearls before pigs to put good Neerwinden Schnapps before dem." And he filled the lieutenant's glass to the brim. "Take it off," said the old man, "it is not strong, although it is so good."

Charwood declined, but took a good sip.

He had scarcely put the glass down before the room swam before his eyes, the figures of Dolly and her father seemed to reel like two indistinct dark masses of cloud; he just saw the old Dutchman standing up looking at him with a diabolical scowl, he heard the door burst open, a confused sound of shouts and musketry, a scream from Dolly—and he fell senseless on the floor.

When he recovered his senses he was in a strange room, and Dolly was bending over him. He sat up and asked: "What is it, Dolly, my darling? Where am I? Where are Carey, and the doctor, and your father?"

"Hush, my dearest," said Dolly. "You must not talk, we've had a fearful night."

But with an effort the lieutenant rose, and insisted upon going out. Such a scene met his gaze when he got out of the door as he had never witnessed before, although he had seen some service. He was in the entrance hall of old Van der Meulen's house. In one corner lay a body covered with a tarpaulin. The lieutenant raised it and he beheld old Van der Meulen, with the same expression on his face as when he last saw him indistinctly in his own room. Every article of furniture was broken; the walls were splashed with blood and indented with the marks of bullets; the sturdy flooring was torn up, and strewn with muskets, cutlasses, and shreds of clothing.

"Go back to your room, my Dolly," said Charwood, "this is no sight for a woman. I am all right now."

So Dolly retired, and the lieutenant went out. In the garden lay in a row half-a-dozen corpses; the snow was torn up and scattered in all directions, even the bushes were broken. Logsday met him.

"We thought you was dead, sir," he said; "the men will be mad with joy when they know you're all right."

"Tell me all about it, Logsday," said Charwood.

"Well, sir," said the boatswain, "afore we had time to alarm you, the beggars had started their business. Old mounseer there played a werry deep game, leastways as regards you, but we weren't to be took in. There must have been a hundred of 'em. They landed in the snowstorm, from that schooner you remember we sighted t'other day. They ran about fifty barrels up to the house, afore we heerd 'em. They did fight like reg'lar devils, sir. I should think we was at it for a couple of hours, all the way up from Quelley Bay to the house, sir. P'raps you'd like to see who we nabbed, sir, as pris'ners. This way, sir."

Charlwood followed Logsdail to the stable, and there he saw the Rev. Mr. Carey and Dr. Windle, tied up, under the guard of a blue-jacket. They were clad in sea-coats and wore big boots, and were as unlike orthodox members of learned professions as could be imagined.

"Them two, sir," said Logsdail, "fought as well as any of 'em. If that 'un," pointing to the parson, "uses his tongue as well as he does a cutlass, he'll do a lot of good at Botany Bay."

"How many men have we lost?" asked the lieutenant.

"Half-a-dozen killed outright, sir," answered Logsdail, "and a round dozen wounded. Poor Tom Hoadley got a bullet in the mouth, and there aint one of us but has got a mark or two—some of 'em pretty ugly ones."

"And you've let none of the runners escape?" asked Charlwood.

"Not one, sir," answered Logsdail; "half-a-dozen of 'em tumbled over the cliff, another half-dozen tried to get off in their boat, but we sank her before she got ten yards from the shore. The old man and his daughter carried you to the house; he was so savage with her for screaming that we thought he'd have killed her. Then he stood at the front door blazing away with his pistols, until some one fetched him a cut on the head and someone else put a bullet into him, and between the two he fell, swearing away like a good 'un in his own furrin lingo."

"Why did they carry me away?" asked Charlwood.

"Lor, sir," answered the boatswain, "your lamp was bowled over, and the whole place burnt to nothing in less than ten minutes arter you was took ill. He wanted to leave you, but miss, she said as how she'd shoot him if he did, and it's my mind that she'd have done it, for she caught hold of one of your pistols, and looked like a young tigress, so said poor Tom Hoadley."

To cut a long story short, by the failure of this last desperate effort of the smugglers, a deathblow was dealt to the trade of Tregannion. The place in fact ceased to be inhabited; the landlord of The Brig took himself to a more lucrative sphere; the quay gradually rotted away; no fresh appointment was made to the cure of Tregannion, and in a few years all that was left was the preventive station on the cliff.

Dolly, by the death of her father, was left homeless and, with the exception of Lieutenant Charlwood, friendless. So of

course he obtained an early leave of absence, took her home with him, and the same Gazette which announced his captain's appointment, set forth that he had made her his wife. When he left the service in course of time, John Logsdail quitted also, and became butler to his old commander, and many scores of times had they to relate their respective adventures upon that Christmas night.

## "OPEN SESAME."

### CHAPTER II. THE COMMUNARD.

"It is not often we have the child to ourselves—eh, sister?" said M. Brunet as soon as Madame Souchet had gone, putting an arm round Marie's waist. "But she is quite grown up. We shall have to find her a husband before long."

"If it rested with you and me, Lucien," replied Madame Desmoulins gravely, "I am afraid we should be at a loss. Happily, Madame Souchet has charged herself with the future."

"Bah! Madame Souchet!" cried Brunet scornfully. "A fine one she to choose a husband!"

Madame Desmoulins shook her head disapprovingly at her brother and frowned.

"And I have got something to tell you," began Marie reluctantly. "I am to ask your permission, mamma—she bade me do it—to ask your permission— She has found somebody, she says, who wants to marry me. At least, he doesn't want to particularly, but his friends want him."

"Sapristi!" muttered Brunet. "She has stolen a march upon me."

"My dear," said Madame Desmoulins, taking Marie by the hand, "it is not for me to oppose anything that your benefactress may wish. But has he won your heart—this somebody?"

"Oh no!" cried Marie. "I have only seen him once or twice. He is fat, with little eyes, like a pig's, and seems to care for nobody but himself."

"I know him," cried Brunet. "A young doctor, Cavalier's nephew, Madame Souchet's great ally. I heard of him, the other day, refusing to visit a poor dying woman till he had his fee paid down into his hands."

"I won't hear any more," interrupted Madame Desmoulins. "It is not becoming in a girl to laugh at a man who may become her husband, and you ought to know better than to try to set her against him."

"But if I can find a better match—a good-looking young fellow who will soon

have his own business as a notary—a fine generous lad, devotedly fond of Marie—father rich, and family all that can be desired!”

“Oh, my uncle!” cried Marie, clasping her hands, and looking gratefully into his face; “all this is like a fairy tale!”

“It is that and nothing else,” said Madame Desmoulins scornfully. “I know whom you mean—Charles, the banker’s son. But reflect, Lucien; his father is the most grasping man in Canville, and Madame Souchet and he are deadly enemies. Can I give Marie a dot? Can you, Lucien?”

“Hum—perhaps; who knows?” said Brunet mysteriously. “I may have savings.”

“You, Lucien?” cried his sister with a bitter incredulous smile. “You with savings, when a five-franc piece burns a hole in your pocket!”

“Or I may have received a legacy,” continued Brunet. “But, however that may be, I have one piece of advice to give you: don’t dispose of Marie’s hand without consulting me. And, Marie, don’t give way to despair. There is always your uncle thinking of your welfare, my child.”

His voice trembling with emotion, his eyes suffused with moisture, gave these words of his peculiar emphasis.

Marie threw her arms about his neck and kissed him effusively. Her mother raised her eyebrows, and went on stitching.

Lucien darted out, using his handkerchief energetically.

“He has an excellent heart, that poor Lucien,” said Madame Desmoulins after a long interval of silence; “but to trust to him is leaning upon a broken reed. What can he do for you, who has never been able to do anything for himself?”

“But, mamma, everyone thinks so highly of Uncle Lucien.”

Madame Desmoulins shrugged her shoulders, as if with her all that did not go for much. Then, as it was growing dark and she could no longer see to work, she rose and went to the window.

All was now quiet in the place. The top of the tall mast, shorn of its gaudy trappings, shone like gold in the rays of the setting sun. A faint, but savoury smell was wafted over from the kitchen of the hotel, reminding her that everybody was feasting now and making merry with friends. The notables of the town were with the maire. The very poorest had some friend, not quite so poor, to give him hospitality; but she, deserted and neglected by all the world, might sup alone upon her hard-earned crust.

But no! she would not sup alone, after all, that night, she recalled with a bitter sigh. She, too, would have her guest—an exile, proscribed, and under the ban of the law, liable to be tracked and hunted down like a wolf, would come to-night and claim her hospitality. And, dangerous as it might be for her, she could not refuse it. Then she would hear the pitiful story of her husband’s death. This young fellow, a hardened sailor, active and full of life, had somehow survived. But her husband—poor Ernest!—had surely succumbed. Still, certainty would be something. Perhaps, knowing that, life might still have something in store for her.

“Mother, you don’t seem a bit glad to have me,” cried Marie, interrupting her mother’s reflections by throwing her arms about her; “and I have been looking forward to being with you and talking over old times.”

“Yes, I am glad to have you, child,” answered the mother wearily, “if not to talk about old times. But I am in some perplexity. I expect a visitor, somebody who knew your father, and I think he brings me news of his last days.”

“Ah, poor papa!” cried Marie, her eyes suffused with tears. “I am always thinking about him. I know that people call him wicked. I have heard nothing else since I came to Madame Souchet’s. It was the same song at the convent—everywhere. But I have not quite believed it. I remember too well. Oh, mother, was he not kind and good?”

Madame Desmoulins hesitated how to reply. For Marie’s own sake she should not be encouraged to dwell upon these memories. The girl inherited a good deal of her father’s temperament. It only needed a spark to fire this ardent nature.

“And do you know,” Marie went on, an angry glow coming into her dark eyes, “what has set me so much against this marriage they propose for me? Aunt Sophie was talking with M. Cavalier about the dowry, and he said with a vile little laugh: ‘With a convict in the family, you must be liberal.’”

“Well,” cried the mother, “and what else do you expect them to say? These are the people you have to live with. Is it not better than beggary and exile?”

Marie was silent and seemed not too certain on which side lay the balance of advantages. Then suddenly, with a change of mood:

“Yes, I have it now. I am sure I know



who is coming. It is the sailor who climbed the mast so gallantly. I was sure I remembered the face. Mamma, you will let me see him too? You will let me hear all about my poor father?"

"No, no!" cried the mother. "It must not be. There would be terrible danger."

At this moment came a soft, but decisive and urgent knock at the door.

"It is he, I am sure of it," whispered Madame Desmoulins to her daughter. "Take the lamp and your work, and go into my bedroom. No, I will not permit you to see him!"

Marie looked rebellious but still obeyed, and, gathering her belongings together, left the room. Madame Desmoulins went to the door and opened.

"You recognise me, madame," said a manly pleasant voice as Madame Desmoulins, a candle in her hand, eagerly scanned the features of her visitor, a man in the prime of life, but with features lined and worn. He was dressed in the blue serge of a seaman, but had a certain air of distinction about him.

"Yes, I recognise you, monsieur," said Madame Desmoulins with a suppressed sigh. Something in the coldness of her tone seemed to disappoint and wound her visitor, who must have expected a more cordial reception.

"Is my visit unwelcome, madame?" he asked with some pride.

"No, no; enter, monsieur, and be welcome," cried Madame Desmoulins. Then as she closed the door upon him: "You must not be offended. I recognise you perfectly; you are M. Victor Delisle, who so often visited us in Paris. But it is necessary to be cautious, monsieur," all this in a low voice, "we have neighbours who, perhaps, are not over friendly," with a suspicious glance around.

"I understand," said Delisle, nodding. "You saw me just now. I was reduced to my last sou; but now I am rich," exhibiting his prize, "and at the expense of the municipality of Canville," Delisle laughed with full enjoyment of the situation.

"Ah, you can laugh, monsieur," said Madame Desmoulins, almost reproachfully.

"Laugh? Yes," cried Victor; his rich mellow voice could not long be kept subdued; "we shall laugh often enough together in the future. And with an empty stomach one laughs at a little."

"You are hungry, perhaps, monsieur?" said Madame Desmoulins, rousing herself to a perception of her duties as hostess.

"Madame, I am famishing," said the sailor, smiling pleasantly.

"Then you must eat before talking, and alas! the resources of my kitchen are scanty."

"Madame, I have discovered what Communism means: it is to share your crust with some poor devil while other people eat the meat."

"Hush!" again cried Madame Desmoulins in a warning tone, as she placed a loaf and a jug of thin cider on the table.

Delisle stretched forth hungrily towards the provisions. Then as a sudden thought struck him, he paused and looked around.

"And la petite!" he cried in a loud voice.

"How, la petite?" demanded Madame Desmoulins, who spread herself out between her visitor and the door of the adjoining chamber, like a hen defending her chick.

"Why, the little Marie—where is she? Does she remember me, the little puss?"

Madame Desmoulins again by a gesture implored him to moderate his voice.

"Ah, she sleeps, perhaps?" said Delisle in a tone of extreme tenderness. "You have put her to bed in good time. Many a night under the tropics we have lain awake, her father and I, and talked of la petite. 'She sleeps now,' her father would say; 'perhaps, if I try hard, I can make her dream of me.' He was full of fancies, you know, the poor man."

Madame Desmoulins sighed. Perhaps it would have pleased her better, have softened her more, to hear that her husband had been thinking of her. But Delisle had no afterthought in what he said.

"That little child, madame," he went on, "has been a kind of guardian angel to me all through my troubles. Perhaps it was because he thought so much of her that I took to thinking about her. Poor man, it was hard to see him, when he was down with the fever for the last time, eyes half closed, pulse almost gone, you could hardly tell he breathed. Well, I bent over him, fancying he was gone, and then he pressed my hand, his lips moved. I could not make out what he said, it was a message for somebody, no doubt, and I just caught the words, 'La petite.'"

The speaker started, and looked suspiciously round as a sound struck his ear. It was a low sob. Next moment the door of the chamber opened, and the sailor sprang to his feet. But his limbs relaxed, and a pleasant smile came over his face as he saw that the intruder was a young girl.

"Mother!" cried Marie between her

sobs, "I could not help hearing it was about papa—about his death."

"Nom de Dieu, death!" cried the sailor joyously; "of what have you been thinking? He is alive—in London, and has sent me to bring you to him, both of you. But," he cried, holding Marie at arm's length, "this la petite! No, no!"

"It is my daughter," interposed Madame Desmoulins coldly. "You understand, in our distress, relations have taken care of her. She has formed ties. She is on the point of being married."

Delisle turned away with a groan of disappointment.

"Then it isn't la petite," he said sadly. "I awake and it is but a dream. The world has gone on living, and we have been dead."

"But, monsieur," interposed Marie tremulously, "I am still the same; just myself and nobody else, and I think I remember you."

"Yes, there is just a look of la petite in the face," cried Delisle, examining the girl's face with a frank tenderness that brought a glow of colour to the cheeks.

"Monsieur," urged Madame Desmoulins earnestly, "all this is pleasant but perilous. Neighbours will listen, perhaps. Let us talk of other things. Marie, as you are here you shall sup with us, and then I must take you home. All the news about your father you shall hear at a future time. Eat, monsieur, for time presses."

"Ah," cried Marie joyously, after a glance at the frugal banquet. "Tenez! I had forgotten," and she ran to a basket hanging from a nail. "Madame Souchet made me bring a few things lest you might be unprepared."

There was half a cold fowl, some pâté de foie, a bottle of red wine, and a brioche of a warm orange colour.

"You are an enchantress, mademoiselle," cried Victor with an admiring glance at the young girl's animated face. Then he looked at Madame Desmoulins, who was sunk in a sombre reverie. And she had just heard news of her husband, and might have been expected to be full of joy and gratitude!

But Marie made up for her mother's coldness. It was a delight to her to provide for the wants of her new friend. She was too much excited to eat herself, and Madame Desmoulins only nibbled a crust of her own loaf. The sailor, however, did duty for them all. He laughed at his own gluttony. He exclaimed against

it, but hunger was too strong for politeness. He ate ravenously, wolfishly.

"Well, I am provisioned for another cruise," he exclaimed joyously, when everything was finished; "and for my next meal I have always a resource," taking out his watch and examining it with pride.

"Pardon me," began Madame Desmoulins; "you talked just now of taking me to join my husband." She carefully omitted all mention of her daughter. "Then I presume my husband has provided you with funds for travelling. The watch is very well for one, but it would hardly do for two."

"Parbleu!" cried the sailor joyously; "it is big enough. And we have travelled half round the world with less. Still, with ladies I admit—but do not be anxious, madame, all that has been provided for."

"Then I have only to pack my trunks; it will not take me long."

"And I, mamma?" cried Marie, with tears in her eyes. "Are you going to leave me behind? Am I not to see my father?"

"I should not like to meet him if I left you behind," said the sailor softly. "Madame, of course we shall take la petite?"

"How is it possible?" asked Madame Desmoulins. "Marie no longer belongs to us. Her marriage is arranged for—"

"But her father should have something to say about that."

"It is not my fault," rejoined Madame Desmoulins, "that she was resigned to the care of others."

"Nor his either," replied the sailor warmly. "Parbleu! one does not visit a penal settlement for the mere fun of the thing. Madame, your husband is a patriot, a hero, a martyr."

Madame Desmoulins nodded her head sadly as if she might have had something on her side to say, but did not think it worth while to say it.

"That would not be the opinion of the gendarmes, it's true," continued the sailor in a light mood. "Pouf! there was one down below who watched me as a cat might a mouse."

"Hush!" cried Madame Desmoulins, raising her hand in warning.

Certainly the tread of a heavy foot could be heard on the stairs, a solemn judicial kind of step, with something of a martial ring about it too. Then a vigorous knocking. "Open in the name of the law."

*The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.*